

Connecticut General Assembly
Appropriations Subcommittee on Elementary and Secondary Education
Public Hearing
March 3rd, 2015

Thank you, Senator Slossberg, Representative Fleischmann, and members of the Committee, for the opportunity to offer you my testimony today. My name is Joelle Goetz and I live in Niantic. I am speaking on behalf of LEARN magnet schools in Southeastern Connecticut as the mother of Leo, student at the Regional Multicultural Magnet School in New London. His school, the oldest magnet school in the whole state, is 7 miles away from our home in Niantic, Connecticut. Here is why this LEARN magnet school is important to my son and to my family.

I would like to see the funding formula and transportation grant increased for non-Sheff magnet schools in southeastern Connecticut. What I found for my son at the Regional Multicultural Magnet School in New London, is a safe place to learn, grow, understand and accept differences, nurture personal strength and become a responsible citizen. Leo's dedicated teachers have been a valuable support for his learning and challenges (Leo has combined ADHD). From the start, because of his sensory overload, Leo was taught to take breaks and integrate therapeutic activities before returning to his classroom, and with every challenges there was always a responsive answer to support him. Leo's progress have been tremendous, and because of the staff's exceptional support, Leo has learned to manage his behavior in such a way that he barely needs his breaks anymore. Leo is also a second generation immigrant from France, and the fact that his school embraces multiculturalism in every aspect has helped him embrace his own background with pride. The school offers a foreign language program taught from Kindergarten on, many staff members are bilingual, there is a bilingual section, there are interventions of guest speakers from different cultures and projects on the student's background. Being surrounded by students from various ethnic background, different towns, different socio economic is a natural enrichment for each and every student in this school. To me, the Regional Multicultural Magnet School represents peace corps at work.

This is why the school's funding is at my heart. I would like to see the funding formula and the transportation grant reimbursement increased for non-Sheff magnet school in Southeastern Connecticut. Transportation funding is important, as it enables families from the surrounding districts the same opportunity as the children from the town of New London to benefit from this exceptional experience at the Regional Multicultural Magnet School or any other LEARN magnet school. Inadequate fundings for transportation compromises the busing system and therefore the possibility for the students of the surrounding districts to be part of the LEARN magnet schools.

Thank you for considering the increase of the funding formula and transportation grant for non-sheff magnet schools in Southeastern Connecticut.

Best Regards,

Joelle Goetz
Niantic, CT